



Memorandum

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION
COMMISSION

SUBJECT: SCVWD's ALMADEN LAKE
STUDY

FROM: Dave Mitchell

DATE: 02-05-14

Approved

Date

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 10

RECOMMENDATION

Accept this update report on the Santa Clara Valley Water District's Study regarding Almaden Lake.

BACKGROUND

On April 3, 2013, the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) staff presented to the City's Parks and Recreation Commission with the following alternatives for Almaden Lake:

- 1) Creek Channel with East and West Lakes
- 2) Creek Channel with West Lake and Open Space Land
- 3) Creek Channel with East Lake and Wetland Planting Area (Eliminated due to mosquito concerns)
- 4) Creek Channel with East Lake and Open Space Land
- 5) Creek Channel with Open Space Land (no lakes)
- 6) No Project Alternative

You can view these alternatives at <http://www.valleywater.org/Mercury/AlmadenLake.aspx>

Once a privately owned gravel quarry, the 32-surface acre lake is now owned in part by the SCVWD and the City of San José. Almaden Lake has been a treasured part of the San Jose community for decades. The lake is the site of many recreational activities and a gathering spot for families eager to take advantage of its sandy swimming beach, water play activities and athletic events.

Almaden Lake now faces some serious ecological and public health problems. Elementary mercury from the mines upstream has settled at the bottom of Almaden Lake and has converted to methylmercury, resulting in its designation as an impaired water body by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. This man-made lake is also an impediment to anadromous fish passage, impacting the survival of steelhead and salmon. Bacterial problems and high blue-green algae counts have also plagued the lake, which resulted in the closure of the lake to swimming since August of 2010.

Due to high level of methylmercury found in the tissue of largemouth bass, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board has issued water quality objectives for methylmercury in both the water and fish tissue for Almaden Lake. As a result, the SCVWD is seeking to solve the water quality problems related to mercury at Almaden Lake along with improving anadromous fish passage within the Guadalupe River Watershed. The SCVWD's staff is currently examining various alternatives for an appropriate solution acceptable in order to define an alternative to be reviewed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as the project description. CEQA requires the analysis of possible impacts to the environment be presented to the SCVWD Board of Directors, the lead decision makers on the project. The goal of the SCVWD's staff is to bring an alternative forward for approval by the SCVWD Board of Directors as a future capital project.

SCVWD held the study's first public meeting in June of 2012, where the lake's mercury-related problems were presented to the community. At the SCVWD's second public meeting held in October of 2012, the study team presented five conceptual alternatives along with the No Project Alternative referenced above. The SCVWD's third public meeting was held in September of 2013, where the study team further discussed the alternatives for the lake. The study team is proposing the next community meeting for March or April of 2014, which should result in a defined alternative to be reviewed under the CEQA. The SCVWD's staff has also attended numerous neighborhood and special interest meetings to further discuss possible solutions for Almaden Lake.

ANALYSIS

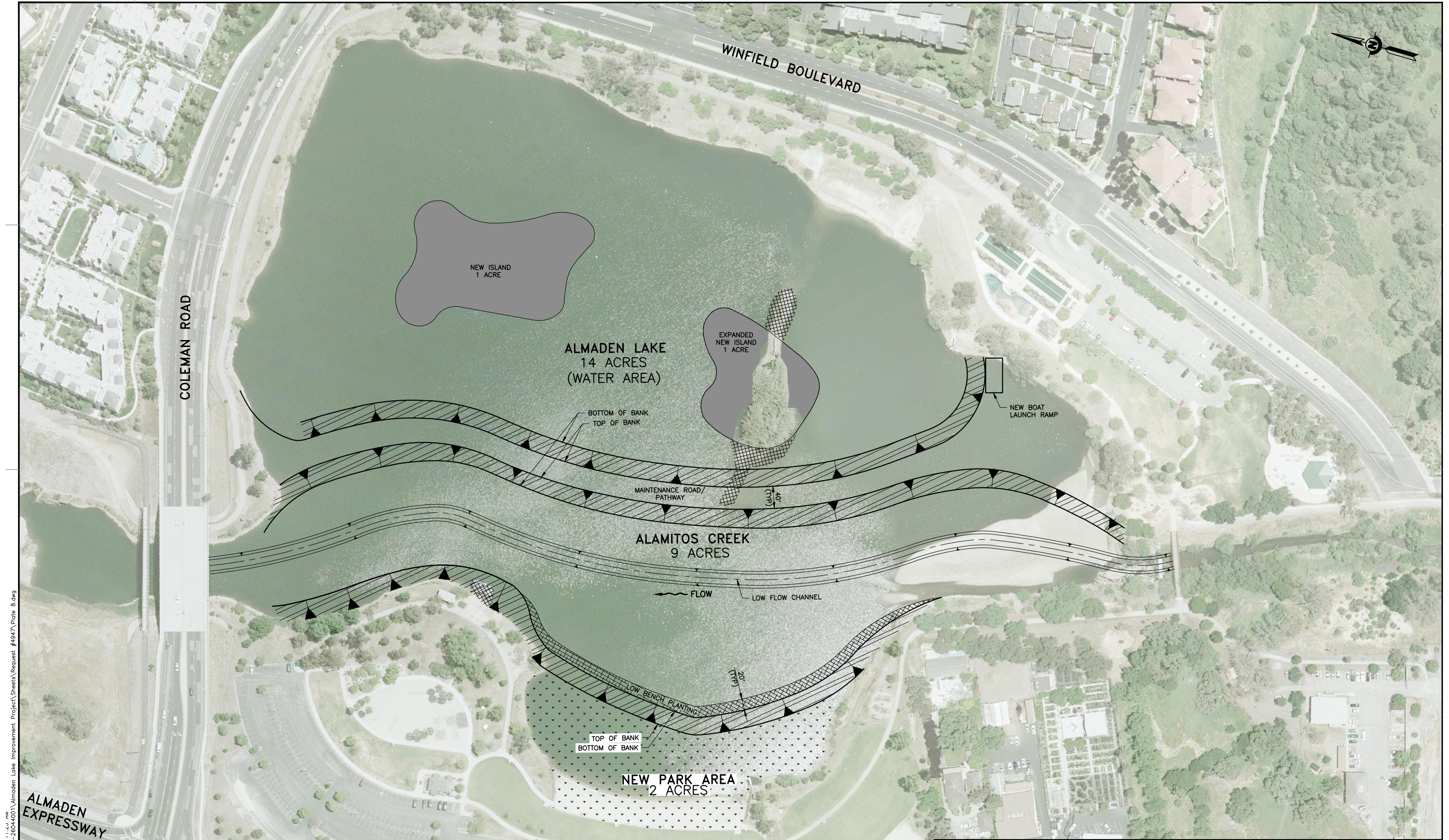
Staff of the SCVWD has engaged PRNS staff regarding their efforts to resolve the mercury related water quality issue at Almaden Lake, and to improve the watershed for anadromous fish. The SCVWD is the lead agency regarding this study, and PRNS staff is following their efforts. Once a project is clearly defined by the SCVWD, City staff will need to make a recommendation, regarding a potential position, to both the Parks and Recreation Commission and the City Council. Ultimately, the City Council will provide City staff with direction to either support or oppose the SCVWD's project for Almaden Lake. The main concern for the City will be the future operational and maintenance costs associated with the revised park facilities at Almaden Lake.

Residents living near Almaden Lake have spearheaded a Save Almaden Lake Initiative. They are playing an important role in bringing information about the Water District's plans for Almaden Lake to the public's attention. They also presented the Mayor with a petition to encourage the adoption of a plan that would preserve as much of the lake as possible.

Rechelle Blank, Associate Civil Engineer from the SCVWD will be at the meeting to update the Commission on two new options for the project and answer your questions. The new options are attached and can be viewed at <http://almadenlakeproject.wordpress.com/2014/01/03/project-team-to-hold-workshops-on-new-feasible-alternatives/>



DAVID J. MITCHELL
Park Manager – Capital



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- LEGEND:
- NEW ISLAND
 - URBAN FOREST
 - OPEN GRASS AREA
 - LOW BENCH PLANTING
 - DEMOLISH

NOTE:
FUTURE WEST BANK MAINTENANCE ROAD/PATHWAY
TO BE DETERMINED

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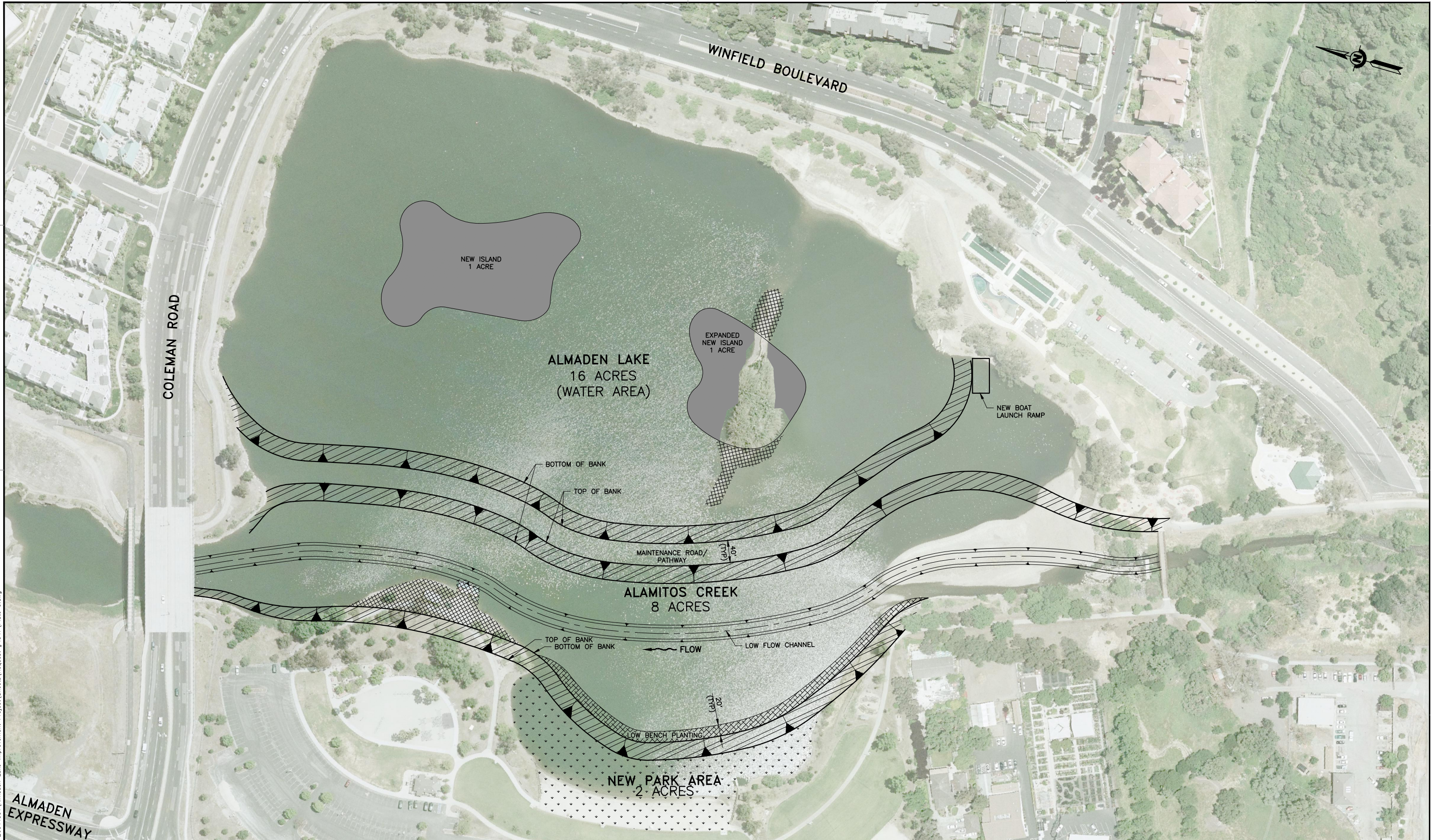


PROJECT NAME AND SHEET DESCRIPTION:
**ALMADEN LAKE
IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

ALTERNATIVE 6
BASE DRAWING

SCALE 1" = 80'	PROJECT NUMBER 26044001
VERIFY SCALES 0 1" BAR IS ONE INCH ON ORIGINAL DRAWING IF NOT ONE INCH ON THIS SHEET, ADJUST SCALES ACCORDINGLY	PLATE 8 1 OF 1

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PROJECT NAME AND SHEET DESCRIPTION: ALMADEN LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT		SCALE 1" = 80'	PROJECT NUMBER 26044001
ALTERNATIVE 7 BASE DRAWING		VERIFY SCALES 0 1" BAR IS ONE INCH ON ORIGINAL DRAWING IF NOT ONE INCH ON THIS SHEET, ADJUST SCALES ACCORDINGLY	PLATE 9 1 OF 1